

## DON'T WAIT UNTIL 1998

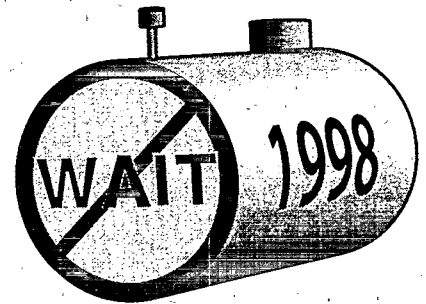
A hidden and potentially costly danger may lurk at your facility—unprotected underground storage tanks storing petroleum. These tank systems may leak and contaminate the surrounding environment and endanger human health.

Facilities are likely to have a variety of underground storage tanks (USTs) storing petroleum products. Most often USTs store fuel to power many types of ground, air, and marine transportation. They also include USTs storing used oil and those that fuel emergency power generators. The term "UST" includes the tank and its associated piping.

Cleaning up contaminated sites can be very costly, especially if groundwater has been affected. Some cleanups have exceeded \$1 million.

Since December 1988, federal regulations have been in place that require all UST owners and operators to bring their USTs into compliance with federal requirements. December 1998 marks the final compliance deadline for USTs not already required to be in full compliance.

The federal UST requirements have four major areas: *prevention, detection, release response, and closure.*



### Preventing Releases

Many releases come from poorly conducted fueling that causes spills and overfills. These mistakes can be avoided by having the fuel deliverer follow standard tank filling practices, which is one of the federal UST regulations. Because mistakes can still happen, USTs must also be equipped with devices that protect the environment from accidental spills and overfills. Another source of releases is the corrosion of tanks and piping that creates leaking holes. To prevent corrosion problems, federal UST requirements call for USTs to be made of noncorrodible materials or provided with corrosion protection using such methods as cathodic protection or interior tank lining.

### Detecting Releases Quickly

Any release that has not been successfully prevented needs to be detected *fast*, before the release can leave the immediate tank site. Severely restricting the impact of an UST release dramatically reduces cleanup costs and minimizes the threat it poses to the environment and human health. Several release detection methods are identified in the federal UST requirements. When installed, operated, and maintained properly, these release detection methods can provide the "early warning system" necessary to prevent big cleanup headaches.

## Responding to Releases

Basically, what gets contaminated needs to be cleaned up as quickly as possible. However, all releases are not the same, and the characteristics of UST sites vary widely as well. This means that the immediate to potentially longer-range steps you take to respond to a release need to be the appropriate corrective action steps. Federal cleanup requirements, guidance provided by state regulatory authorities, and the expertise provided by reliable cleanup contractors will enable you to do the right thing.

## Closing USTs Properly

It is very important that USTs being "retired" are closed as required by federal UST regulations. You can't just walk away from an old UST site. Instead, you have to determine if the site has been contaminated, take any appropriate corrective steps, clean out the tank, and either remove the tank or fill it with an inert substance. The cleaning and removal of tanks is dangerous work and must be done only by professionals who follow standard industry safety practices.

## When Do UST Requirements Start?

Timing is everything, and some of the requirements are tied to the date of the UST system installation:

- USTs installed after December 1988 need to meet standards for spill, overfill, and corrosion protection *when they are installed*; and
- USTs installed before December 1988 must meet standards for spill, overfill, and corrosion protection *by December 1998*. If not, these USTs must be replaced or closed properly.

In addition, all federally regulated USTs need to comply with requirements for notification, release detection, corrective action, closure, and recordkeeping that are in effect now.

Your USTs do not need to meet the federal requirements if they are: USTs storing *heating oil* used on the premises where it is stored; USTs on or above the floor of underground areas, such as basements or tunnels; and tanks of 110 gallons or less capacity. Also, airports using hydrant fueling systems need to comply only with federal corrective action requirements. USTs used for *emergency generators* do not need to comply with release detection requirements, but they do need to comply with all other federal UST requirements.

You need to know that states have the primary responsibility for implementing and enforcing UST standards. State standards may differ from those established by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Before making decisions on UST compliance, you should check with the appropriate state UST programs.

## What Should You Do?

With all of these UST requirements to worry about, this is a good time to inventory your USTs and decide if you really need all of them. In some cases you may be able to identify alternative fuel supplies. In many cases you may be able to consolidate tank resources more effectively—your managerial responsibilities will clearly reduce as you minimize the number of USTs to only those you *must* have.

Even so, you are likely to have a number of USTs that need to remain in service and that need to be upgraded to meet the spill, overfill, and corrosion requirements by December 1998. (Or you will have decided to replace or close these USTs.) With that 1998 date in mind, there are many reasons why you need to act as soon as possible.

- As the deadline nears, increased customer demand to upgrade, replace, or close USTs may result in higher charges for these services and also make it difficult to find available contractors and supplies.
- It can take several months to upgrade, replace, or close an UST, and bad weather or contractor delays are not uncommon. Also, before work can start, local construction and regulatory permits may be necessary.
- If you miss the deadline, for any reason, you can be cited for violations and fined.

So don't wait until 1998—take action *now*.

## Need Information On USTs?

EPA has prepared several easy-to-read booklets that explain the UST requirements. To order these free publications, get more information about UST requirements, or identify state regulatory authorities call **EPA's toll-free Hotline at 800-424-9346**. Remember, requirements and deadlines may be different in some states, so check with your state UST program office. You can also find UST publications, links to state regulatory authorities, and other information on USTs at EPA's Office of Underground Storage Tanks Web site at <http://www.epa.gov/OUST/>.

Some of EPA's helpful publications are: *Musts For USTs: A Summary Of Federal Regulations For USTs*; *Closing USTs: Brief Facts*; *Don't Wait Until 1998: Spill, Overfill, And Corrosion Protection For USTs*; and *Straight Talk On Tanks: Leak Detection Methods For Petroleum USTs And Piping*.

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